

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

IO-10 EB-07 AGR-05 FEA-01 /081 W

----- 130513

R 221025Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2963

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 17046

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: CABINET MINI-SHUFFLE

1. AFTER ALL THE SPECULATION IN RECENT MONTHS THAT MS. GANDHI WAS PLANNING TO MOVE PEOPLE IN AND OUT OF HER CABINET LIKE MARBLES IN A PINBALL MACHINE, THE CHANGES ANNOUNCED DEC. 20 (AND LAST NOV. 30) ARE ANTICLIMATIC. NOV. 30 MINISTER-WITHOUT-PORTFOLIO BANSI LAL HAS NOW BECOME DEFENSE MINISTER, ONE OF THE POSITION EARLIER RUMORED FOR HIM, AND PROVIDES MS. GANDHI WITH SOMEONE WHO IS LOYAL, TOUGH, AND A GOOD ADMINISTRATOR IN THAT ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION, THESE REQUIREMENTS (IN JUST ABOUT THAT ORDER) ARE ALL THAT IS REQUIRED FOR A DEFENSE MINISTER AT THIS POINT.

2. MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER P.C. SETHI NOW MOVES TO DELHI TO BECOME MINISTER FOR CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZER. (IN 1971-2 SETHI WAS MINISTER OF STATE WITH INDEPENDENT CHARGE OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS.) HIS RETURN TO THE CABINET LEJES K.D. MALAVIYA WITH A TRUNCATED MINISTRY COVERING ONLY PETROLEUM. SETHI'S DEPARTURE FROM MADHYA PRADESH, WHERE ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS, FACTIONAL POLITICS, AND SCANDALS IN THE

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AGRICULTURAL FIELD HAVE PLAGUED HIM, HAS BEEN RUMORED

REPEATEDLY FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS. SETHI IS A GANCHI-LOYALIST AND CAN BE RELIED UPON TO DO NOTHING UNTOWARD IN HIS NEW POSITION. HE HAS OFTEN BEEN CRITICAL OF THE US IN SPEECHES IN MADHYA PRADESH BUT ESSENTIALLY IS A PARROT OF WHAT HE BELIEVES THE "PARTY LINE" TO BE AT ANY GIVEN TIME. NO REPLACEMENT FOR SETHI IN MADHYA PRADESH HAS BEEN SELECTED AS YET.

3. MINISTER OF STATE VITHAL GADGIL, APPOINTED TO THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS ONLY THREE WEEKS AGO, WAS MOVED TO DEFENSE PRODUCTION. THE FORMER MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE PRODUCTION, RAM NIWAS MIRDHA, WAS ELEVATED TO MINISTER OF SUPPLY AND REHABILITATION WHICH WAS VACANT AFTER THE RECENT DEPARTURE FROM THE CABINET OF R.D. KHADILKAR.

4. THESE CHANGES DO NOT DISCOURAGE OR EXHAUST THE PURVEYORS OF RUMORS, WHO SAY THAT MORE CHANGES ARE STILL IN THE WIND. MS. GANDHI HAS NOT BEEN PRONE TO CHANGE HER CABINETS IN MID-PARLIAMENTARY SESSION, HOWEVER, AND SO IF NOTHER FURTHER SURFACES IN THE NEXT WEEK BEFORE THE CHANDIGARH CONGRESS PARTY MEETING, WE WILL HEAVE A GENTLE SIGH AND ASSUME THE CABINET WE HAVE NOW WILL SURVIVE ANOTHER MONTH OR TWO WITHOUT FURTHER ALTERATIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NEWDE17046
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750444-0813
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751219/aaaaaqix.tel
Line Count: 84
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CABINET MINI-SHUFFLE
TAGS: PINT, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006